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ABSTRACT

Steps to foster improvement in individualized instruction are outlined, and stress is placed on developing teacher competencies and systematic procedures. The steps used to accomplish this include planning in terms of goals; organizing work; establishing the proper classroom environment; employing teaching strategies that are diagnostic, prescriptive, and evaluative; and incorporating appropriate learning strategies. This procedural model is both cyclical and continuous. (DS)

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Monograph #3

# Teachers Can Individualize Instruction

## Using a Systematic Procedural Model

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TEACHERS CAN INDIVIDUALIZE INSTRUCTION

USING A SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURAL MODEL

The Utah System Approach to Individualized Learning Project was funded in July of 1970 through a United States Office of Education Title III grant. It has continued through State and local funding.

The project is a multi-district/state consortium effort. Davis, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Murray, and Tooele districts have been involved since its inception.

Project policy and management is under the direction of Superintendents John Reed Call, Clarke N. Johnsen, J. Clair Morris, Glen C. Oldroyd, Walter D. Talbot, Bernell Wrigley, Donald J. Parr, Chairman.

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## TEACHERS CAN INDIVIDUALIZE INSTRUCTION USING A SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURAL MODEL

Is it possible to help teachers individualize instruction? Should educators continue to attempt to meet the challenge of providing experiences which build teacher competency in meeting individual student needs? The answer to both questions is a qualified yes. It is possible for a teacher to learn how to work with students in a personalized environment if he accepts the challenge that to meet the individual needs of learners, not only should be done, but can be done. Once this attitude exists, with focused help, change in teaching can occur. It can happen because commitment is then combined with productive activity.

When it is desirable and possible to individualize instruction, the reader may wonder why so many past efforts to change practice have not been successful. The abortive attempts in public education to individualize instruction are well documented. In some instances change in behavior was legislated without guidelines for "how to change" being set. In other cases, instead of working with the total process procedures have involved tinkering with bits and pieces of instruction. The avoidance of systematically going about the task has been too often the norm rather than the exception.

It has been consistently maintained that each learner should be the focus of educational practice. What has been lacking is a practical, systematic way to actualize what is theoretically desirable.

The word individualization itself suggests many things to many people. The idea that "individualization" is synonymous with the idealized "always appropriate task for every learner" is not realistic. It is not possible for all students, at all times, to have an exactly prescribed appropriate task. A more rational view is that providing for individual differences requires compromise between what would be ideal and what is actually possible to achieve. Operationally, in the world of classroom practice, individualization of instruction can be defined as provision of the most nearly appropriate task for each learner. Taken into account are variables such as the teacher, the specific point in time, and the resources available. With this practical position as a working base, a teacher who will try, and who has assistance, can more nearly approximate the ideal. Inservice instruction can provide the assistance needed.

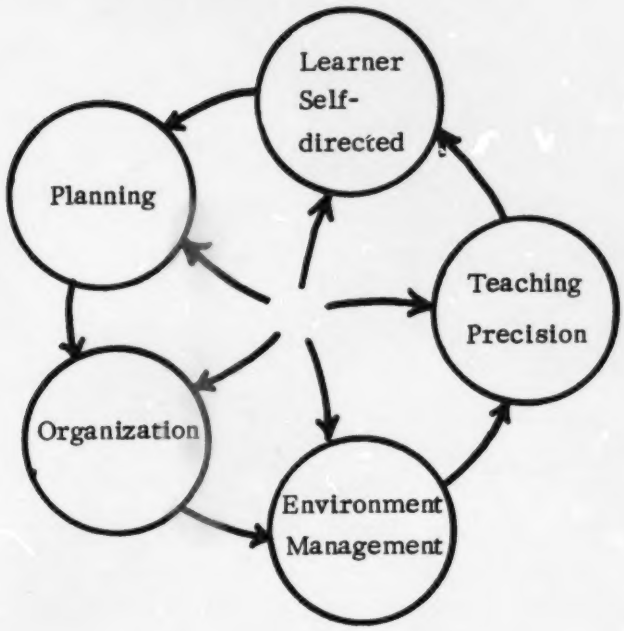
An effective in-service program provides experiences in which specific installation phases are described and implemented. There is provision for developing competencies in management and instruction. How is this possible? It is done by using sound teaching principles and applying them to the instruction of teachers. In this framework, the why, what, and how of teaching are continuously explored.

The steps used to accomplish this include, planning, organizing, installing an environment, employing teaching strategies which are diagnositic, prescriptive and evaluative, and incorporating appropriate learning strategies. It is a cyclical procedural model which, once set in motion, is continuous.

PROCEDURAL MODEL

A Review Of

Simple Steps to Improvement of Instruction




When operational, the process is effective. Once begun it is possible to install a program one step at a time. The procedure utilized to do this is described as follows:

Planning

First, teachers learn to plan in terms of goals. This phase includes focusing on terminal objectives for learners. The aims of education are

explored and the philosophical bases for practice detailed. Such planning brings into conscious review the publics served, the needs of students, and the expectations of society. Coming to an agreement within oneself, or within groups, about "why" education is a life long encounter--but keeping purposes with a "for now" in mind, gives a sound foundation for the kinds of activity which students encounter. For example: a terminal objective might include a statement that students should emerge from the public schools as knowing, independent, and responsible citizens. Logically, activity during the schooling process should then be organized to give learners opportunities to plan, make decisions, and complete tasks which help them build toward these goals.

Organization

When initial planning is done, work is organized. Resources are assembled with diagnostic and prescriptive teaching in mind. It is recognized that since students come to the school situation in groups, the challenge presented is to meet the needs of each individual within the framework of a group setting. Each classroom, each building, each group, each child is unique from every other. Yet, the responsibility for the total group is never abandoned. Thus to organize resources efficiently is a must. The teacher's responsibility is to create, from whatever is available, an environment in which a climate for individualization can occur. To do this, time, space, materials and methodology need careful review in terms of how best to accomplish goals set. Each student is accepted and valued as an individual

of dignity and worth. Accountability is assumed. That each teacher and each learner will try is an expectation!

Environment Management

If organization is done well, establishing an environment becomes the phase in which plans are put into action. Teachers are given help as they apply what they learn about management. Use of space is made functional. Time frames are made flexible. Materials are coded and placed for quick and effective retrieval. Needs grouping and independent learner activities are established. Student responsibility for commitments and record keeping are built into the system. Working with one area of activity at a time, effective management procedures are installed. Gradually improved practice is realized.

Working together with his students, the teacher sets goals, works toward them and assesses progress made. Within this, "always becoming", structure, success builds naturally upon success. When even partially accomplished, classroom living becomes more student oriented. An observer will see diversified groupings, multi-use of materials and a variety of activities. Students will know what they are doing and why. They will have materials available to them. Group and individual records will be kept. Conferencing between the teacher and individual learners will be a higher priority activity.

When this kind of environment has been installed, there is order, structure, and freedom within structure. The mechanics for individualization have been operationalized and the stage set for indepth quality instruction.

With teaching as the next focus, each teacher is given opportunities to develop depth as a clinician in the classroom. Both the academic content for instruction and the multi-dimensions of learners' differences are studied. Expertise in diagnosis, prescription, and evaluation are developed. This involves more than placing learners in appropriate content. It necessitates awareness of such variables as achievement, differences in behavior, diversity of social background, and each student's personal interests. The gamut of individual differences is explored. Practice is continuously modified to accomodate what is known about each learner. The teacher is taught how to cope effectively with the fact that some students require more teacher direction and more structure than others. He is helped with realistically prescribing tasks and recognizing that diagnosis and prescription have to be framed in terms of realistically prescribing tasks. Recognizing that diagnosis and prescription have to be framed in terms of realistic goals, student "spread" is not permitted to override what can be managed. Since students cannot be "homogenized" on any criterion for long periods of time, groupings are kept open and responsive to student needs. Learning principles are studied and applied as the teacher becomes increasingly effective.

Learner Self-direction

Finally, as teachers learn to individualize instruction, they place more and more emphasis on what the learner does. Strategies are employed

whereby students are given opportunities to learn "how to learn". Each learner is given experiences which encourage independence and responsible activity. He is placed in situations where he is able to make choices, set goals, assess his own progress. Within this framework the teacher counsels, assists and teaches while the learner learns. Hopefully, each learner moves closer and closer toward becoming a knowing, caring, rational decision-making human being.

The Total View

When the cycle is completed once, the phases then become intertwined and continuous in their operation. No teacher or learner ever "arrives". Though the ideal is never reached, as the school becomes more nearly designed for individuals to learn together, reality goals come closer to ideal ones. Both students and teachers become increasingly proficient in their ability to assess growth and set appropriate goals for instruction.

Why does this system work? It works because it is reality based and deals with the instructional system rather than bits and pieces in isolation. It provides organized in-service in which teachers can grow professionally. It has feedback, accountability, and self-renewal built into the system.

What has been demonstrated? It has been shown that in many places when teachers accept the necessity for individualization of instruction and work toward achieving an individualized program in a systematic way, it not only can be done, it is being done today!